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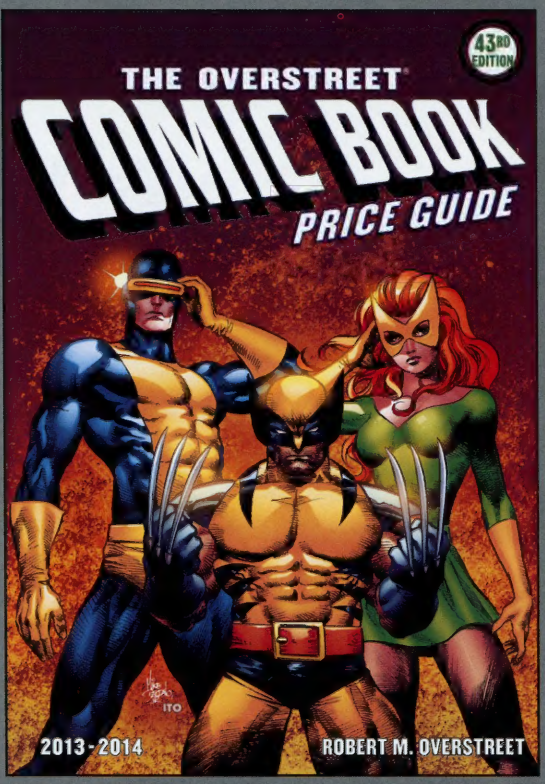

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(*The Avengers, New Avengers*)

X-MEN

SUPERMAN

Andy Kubert
(*Before Watchmen: Nite Owl*)

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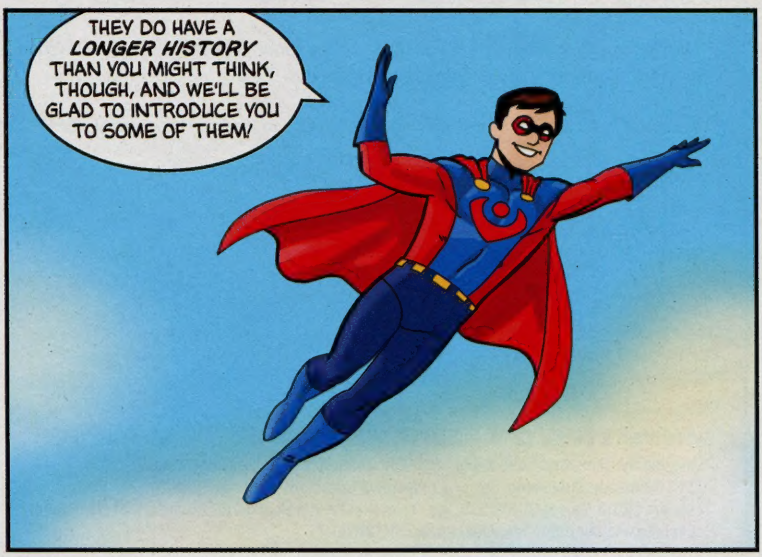
WELCOME TO OUR SPECIAL *FREE COMIC BOOK DAY* ISSUE OF *COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE!*
WE'RE CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF COMIC BOOKS THAT HAVE INSPIRED SOME GREAT – AND SOME NOT SO GREAT – MOVIES.

LAST YEAR, WE SAW *THE AVENGERS* AND *THE DARK KNIGHT RISES* CAPTURE THE IMAGINATIONS OF FANS AROUND THE GLOBE...

AND AS *BIG* AS THEY WERE, THEY WERE JUST *THE LATEST* COMIC BOOK-INSPIRED *SUCCESSES*.

THIS YEAR SHOULD SEE A FEW COMIC-RELATED *HITS* OF ITS OWN...

AND OF COURSE COMIC BOOK MOVIES HAVE NOT JUST BEEN ABOUT SUPERHEROES...


THEY DO HAVE A *LONGER HISTORY* THAN YOU MIGHT THINK, THOUGH, AND WE'LL BE GLAD TO INTRODUCE YOU TO SOME OF THEM!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

Issue #3 • Spring 2013

A lot has changed since *Spider-Man* debuted at movie theaters in 2002. Of course it wasn't the first big budget movie based on a comic book character – not even close – but at that point it had been five years since 1997's *Batman & Robin* temporarily shut down the Batman franchise and 15 years since *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* pulled the plug on the Man of Steel's movie exploits. With those once-booming film series comatose, almost the entire comic book industry watched to see what would become of Sam Raimi's effort.

Raimi was at that point best known for his *Evil Dead/Army of Darkness* franchise (low budget, but definitely cult hits) and the box office dud *For The Love of the Game* (seriously, one of the greatest baseball movies ever, but still a bomb). Between his credits and his casting choices, there was a major unknown quality hanging over our expectations.

Of course it's difficult to put ourselves in our own shoes a decade ago because of the success comic book-inspired movies have enjoyed in the intervening years, but back then one bomb could have spelled the end of the genre. That's no longer the case, of course. For every underperforming feature such as *Incredible Hulk*, there's an *Iron Man*. For every disappointment such as *Green Lantern* or *Jonah Hex*, there's *The Dark Knight*. Back then, a failure could easily kill comic book movie projects for five or more years.

And I don't mean to denigrate Fox's *X-Men* franchise, which I've very much enjoyed, but it really felt to my colleagues, our friends at DC, Marvel and elsewhere, that it was all on Spider-Man's shoulders.

The day *Spider-Man* hit theaters, several of us from the Gemstone Publishing and Diamond Comic Distributors offices headed to the theater right after work. While it was running, I sat there smiling uncontrollably. Truth be told, it wasn't because the film was great. It was because it *wasn't* horrible. Later on I decided that I really liked it, but my first reaction was one of relief.

As soon as I stepped outside the theater, my cell phone rang. It was my brother. "How was it?" he asked. He didn't say hello. Only a comic book guy by blood relation, he still knew the stakes.

"They're going to make more of these. A lot more. The movies just caught up with Stan Lee's imagination from 40 years ago," I said.

This issue we turn the spotlight on the source material for some of these films.

Read on!

J.C. Vaughn
Associate Publisher &
Executive Editor

Overstreet's COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #3. Spring 2013 • Free Comic Book Day.
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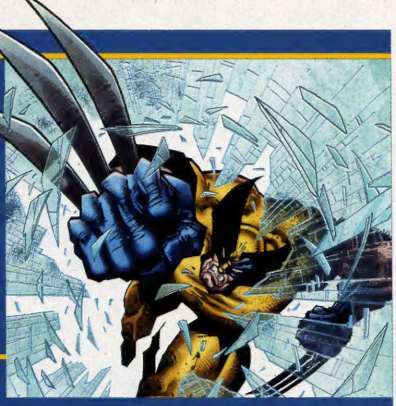

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If you're traveling to Comic-Con International: San Diego this year (July 17-21, 2013), stop by and visit us at the Diamond Comic Distributors / Fandom Advisory Network booth, #2401, at the San Diego Convention Center!

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Moving Pictures: From the Comic Page to the Silver Screen

By Mark Squirek

The number of comic characters and graphic novels that have been made into films over the last twenty-five years is amazing. The titles are as diverse as the inventory in a good comic store. *The Amazing Spider-Man*, The *Dark Knight* Trilogy by Christopher Nolan, *Sin City, Ghost World, Hellboy, 30 Days of Night, The Rocketeer*, *The Avengers* and *Road to Perdition* have all received the big screen treatment.

For decades Hollywood had all but ignored the comic medium. But as director Tim Burton's *Batman* series so ably demonstrated, a well-made film based on a recurring comic book character or graphic novel can make millions at the box office. Burton's film was an original, and it was also highly respectful to the story source, which at the time included over fifty years of Batman history.

For a filmmaker or screenwriter, staying true to the character of an original graphic novel can prove to be difficult. Comics and film share similarities as storytelling mediums, but they are obviously different and each has its own individual needs. No single film can possibly condense the continuity built inside a character such as Batman, Thor or Spider-Man. Intelligent and respectful choices about what to include must be made.

Spider-Man is one of the most recognizable fictional characters in the world. But if a producer thinks "Spider-Man should shoot webbing out of his eyes

This iconic panel from *Amazing Spider-Man* #50 was uncannily re-created for the *Spider-Man 2* movie.

because Superman has heat vision so it's the same thing only webs," the screenwriter better figure out a way to make this real or legions of comic fans will tear him apart and audiences will stay away in droves. And if you don't think discussions like this go on in Hollywood, think again.

In addition to fidelity to the source, comic fans love references to original art or comic book storylines inside a movie. The insider feeling you get from seeing Batman perched atop a gargoyle on a dark night in the rain or noticing Spider-Man's uniform draped across a garbage can exactly as it was in John Romita's splash page from *Amazing Spider-Man* #50 can cause even the most jaded fan to smile.

Closest to Their Sources

The 2005 film *Sin City* was a spectacular adaptation of an original series of graphic novels. From the texture of the screen image, the lighting, the characterization and the special effects, what we saw on the screen met nearly every comic fan's expectations. Co-director Robert Rodriguez was widely quoted as referring to the film as a "translation" not an "adaptation" of the stories. With the exception of some very minor changes, what you see on the screen matched what co-director and writer Frank Miller brought to the original graphic novels.

As directors, Rodriguez and Miller elected to change very little from their source material. To varying degrees, other film adaptations haven't been as faithful to their graphic novel source as *Sin City* was. While some creators and fans believe that changing what they first read in a comic is blasphemy, the demands of film (and subsequently the marketplace) are different.

Few storylines in comics is as revered as the one that held the *Watchmen* miniseries together. Considered a masterpiece of the genre, *Watchmen* is still one of the most exciting and challenging reads. In the case of the movie *Watchmen* the changes, while not massive in number, were determined to be necessary to serve the needs of film as a separate medium from GNs.

In the film, heroes behaved more like traditional comic characters with their powers and abilities seemingly heightened above those of normal humans. One of the most engaging aspects of the original story was the fact that most of the heroes were struggling with the limitations of having no real traditional comic book powers. Other changes include the elimination of certain plot points such as the motivation for Ozymandias' ultimate action at the end.

While the critical reaction was mostly positive, some took the film to task for being too closely based on the original

graphic novel. Camera angles matched specific panels in the comic and costumes were meticulously duplicated. Still, to those not familiar with the original graphic novel, that strict adherence to the source material limited the film adaptation, leaving a story that could only be appreciated by fans.

In today's marketplace, fidelity to the source is of the utmost importance to fans and fan reaction to both *Sin City* and *Watchmen* was usually very positive.

In the right hands, source fidelity can be stretched and molded to make a better film. *Ghost World* is a perfect example. The film introduces a major character that didn't appear in the original story. This gently shifts the focus off of the relationship between Enid and Rebecca.

But the screenwriter was the same writer and artist who created the original story, Dan Clowes. Throughout the film, director and co-screenwriter Terry Zwigoff stays true to Clowes original style. The characterization is as sharp and beautiful as it was in the original. While the comic was a very blue-based color scheme, Zwigoff opened up a much brighter color scheme. The actors were spot on, almost scarily so. Both fans and audiences loved the film.

In *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World,* director Edgar Wright condensed six books into one script with multiple story lines becoming casualties in the process. Still, he kept a fair amount of original dialogue from Bryan Lee O'Malley's original comics in the film and it really works. While some had an issue with an apparent softening of the character of Scott Pilgrim, the director successfully captured the look and feel of the original and the film has gone on to become a cult classic.

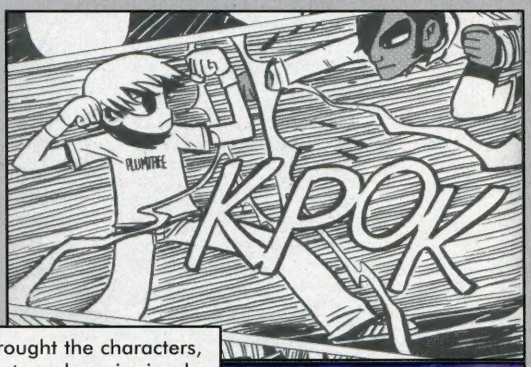
Sometimes changes made to a graphic novel as it moves to the screen can change its original meaning. In *V for Vendetta*, the time line moves from the 1990s to somewhere between the years 2028-2038. Losing the direct references to Thatcher-period England moves the story's theme in a much different direction. Alan Moore, author of the original graphic novel, was unhappy with what was done and made his concerns public (he has not had official ties to any of the films adapted from his work).

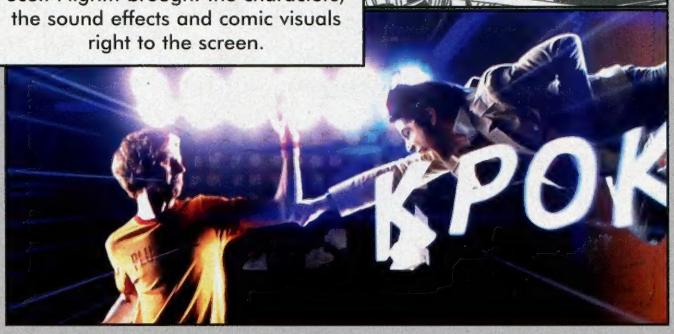
The biggest change may have been to the character of V himself. Once willing to do anything to get his way, the film tones down his single-minded pursuit of what he wants to the point where he has become something else all together.

Blending the Source Material

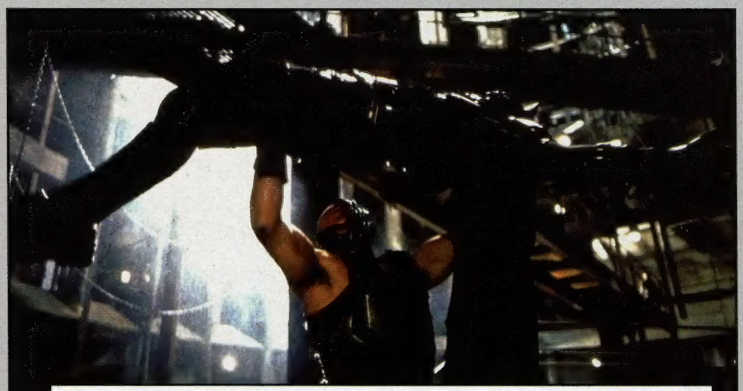
Taking a specific character and creating a film around that character is a different challenge for the filmmaker. Batman, Green Lantern and Iron Man all have decades of deep history behind them. As the times have changed, they have changed.

Tim Burton chose to keep the yellow





Scott Pilgrim brought the characters, the sound effects and comic visuals right to the screen.



Most comic fans knew what *The Dark Knight Rises* version of Bane was planning, thanks to this panel from *Batman* #497.

circle around the bat-emblem on the chest of his costume. For his take on Batman, Christopher Nolan went back to basics and used a much more fundamental, but completely modern looking costume. In both films you could feel the weight and power of the uniform.

For his first Batman film, Burton referenced the famous Batman one-shot by Alan Moore and Brian Bolland, *Batman: The Killing Joke*. He anchored Batman's origin inside the "Joe Chill murders Bruce Wayne's parents" concept, familiar to many fans. But instead of Joe Chill being a petty criminal who just happened to kill the Waynes, Burton changes the name of "Joe Chill" to "Jack Napier" and added the notion that the murderer eventually became the Joker. While Jack Napier created Batman when he shot Wayne's parents, Batman also created The Joker when he caused Napier to fall into a vat of chemicals. This is the same idea used in *The Killing Joke*.

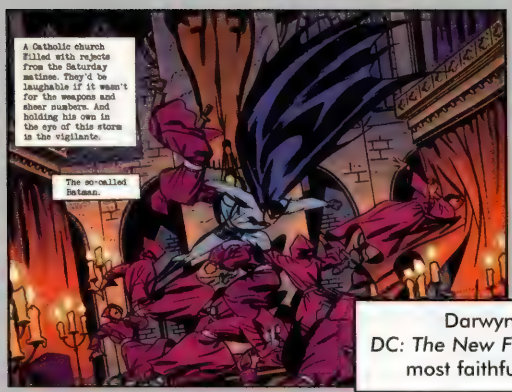
Burton's choice of Michael Keaton was initially met with concern by fans. But the choice paid off in spades as Keaton's take on both Batman and Bruce Wayne was inspired. Nicholson's Joker has entered into screen legend as one of the greatest villains of all time. Still, there are those who make the case that he dominated the film.

For his version of Batman, Nolan spread several story lines across his trilogy of films. The first, *Batman Begins* holds several elements from *Batman Year One*. Visually Nolan takes some of his most stunning imagery straight from comic books. When the bats fly out of the cave comic fans across the world smiled knowingly. It also incorporates the villain Ra's al Ghul into the origin, bypassing the more traditional Joe Chill storyline.

The second film in the trilogy, *The Dark Knight,* is generally considered the greatest superhero film ever made. Some rank it among the greatest films ever made. References to *The Killing Joke* can be seen throughout as Nolan builds the film to a taut and believable climax.

As strong as Heath Ledger's Joker was (he won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his work), this time Batman matches him beat for beat. The skill of the actors involved moved the film somewhere that the audience had never seen a superhero film go before coupled with an incredible script by Jonathan Nolan, and the director moves the film into the mythic.

The third film, *The Dark Knight Rises* incorporates at least two memorable storylines taken directly from the comic books. Bane's breaking of Batman's back is taken directly from *Batman* #497. The isolation of Gotham that we see in the film comes from an idea spread out across



Darwyn Cooke's *DC: The New Frontier* inspired a most faithful adaptation.

the multiple issue story arc known as *No Man's Land*. Only this time it isn't an earthquake that isolates Gotham, it is the deliberate action of the villain.

In Marvel's *Iron Man*, changes made to the origin were almost mandatory. As conceived by Stan Lee, Iron Man had his origin in Vietnam. That wasn't going to work for a modern audience. Leaving a character inside his original time period is a tough choice.

With an eye toward building a franchise, director Jon Favreau and his screenwriting team moved the story into the modern age by changing the local from Vietnam to Afghanistan. Robert Downey, Jr.'s take on Tony Stark fit the womanizing brash playboy to a T. Strong acting across the board combined with amazing special effects made the film a monstrous hit. Comic fans couldn't argue with the evolution of the various Iron Man costumes through the course of the film.

Sometimes changes *need* to be made. At other times they are creative choices. In the case of Nick Fury, casting Samuel L. Jackson was something Marvel's Ultimate Comics line telegraphed with their depiction of the character. In the *X-Men* movies costume changes from the more traditional blue and yellow of the comic books to the black uniforms of the film worked perfectly. While not as psychologically deep as *The Dark Knight*, the series of *X-Men* films stayed true to the source in multiple ways.

DC's animated adaptation of Darwyn Cooke's *DC: The New Frontier* stands among the most faithful takes on a graphic novel series ever. Like *Sin City*, it could almost serve a frame by frame comparison between the two mediums. The scene when Batman first appears in the temple, his long-eared early Golden Age cowl rising into the screen, is thrilling for both hardcore fans as well as those who know nothing about the series. The physical disparity between Superman and Wonder Woman is a joy to see. Verbal references inside the script to Dinosaur Island and black and white images of The Losers floating by only add to the thrill for comic fans. While not a theatrical release, the faithful nature of the filmmaker's work deserves special mention.

Adapting from an outside source to film can cause screenwriters a million headaches. It can alienate the original creators and it can either bring new fans to the medium or confuse old ones. It is a tough challenge. But when done correctly such as it is in *Dark Knight*, *Ghost World* or *Iron Man*, everyone wins.

Especially fans of comic books and graphic novels.

Mark Squirek, an Overstreet Advisor, comics historian and longtime collector, is an award-winning actor, playwright, and writer of short fiction. He is a featured critic on our Scoop email newsletter and also writes for the New York Journal of Books.

TOP MOVIE & TV-RELATED

There's no question that financial success of movies and TV shows based on comic book properties has helped escalate the demand for key issues of select titles over the years.

Action Comics #1

First appearance of Superman
June 1938
2012 NM– Price: $1,750,000

Detective Comics #27

First appearance of Batman
May 1939
2012 NM– Price: $1,350,000

Captain America Comics #1

First appearance of Captain America
March 1941
2012 NM– Price: $275,000

Whiz Comics #1 (#2)

First appearance of Captain Marvel
February 1940
2012 NM– Price: $110,000

More Fun Comics #73

First appearances of Green Arrow
and Aquaman - November 1941
2012 NM– Price: $31,000

Brave and the Bold #28

First Justice League of America
February-March 1960
2012 NM– Price: $23,000

Fantastic Four #1

First appearance of the Fantastic Four
November 1961
2012 NM– Price: $90,000

Amazing Fantasy #15

First appearance of Spider-Man
August 1962
2012 NM– Price: $150,000

Tales of Suspense #39

First appearance of Iron Man
March 1963
2012 NM– Price: $32,000

COMIC BOOKS

Journey Into Mystery #83

First appearance of Thor
August 1962
2012 NM– Price: $40,000

Incredible Hulk #1

First appearance of the Hulk
May 1962
2012 NM– Price: $90,000

X-Men #1

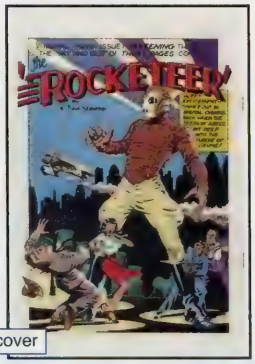
First appearance of the X-Men
September 1963
2012 NM– Price: $35,000

Strange Tales #135

Nick Fury joins SHIELD
August 1965
2012 NM– Price: $600

Incredible Hulk #181

Debut of Wolverine
November 1974
2012 NM– Price: $1,725



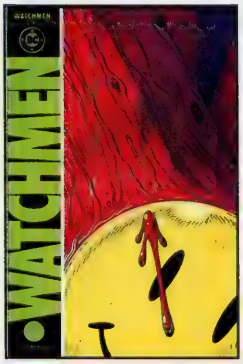
Back cover

Starslayer #2

First appearance of the Rocketeer
April 1982
2012 NM– Price: $18

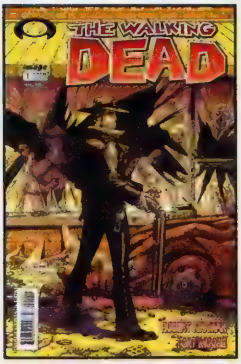
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1

First appearance of the Turtles
1984
A CGC 9.8 has sold for $22,752



Watchmen #1

First appearance of the Watchmen
September 1986
2012 NM– Price: $20



The Walking Dead #1

First appearance of Rick Grimes
October 2003
2012 NM– Price: $250

For the latest prices on these comics – and about 300,000 other issues – check out *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* #43, on sale Wednesday, July 17, 2013.

Comic Books at the Movies

By Brandon G. DeStefano

From the earliest animated efforts to the modern, big budget, special effects-driven blockbusters, comic characters have always been an important part of cinema history. What was once exclusively kid's stuff, though, now seems to hold the key to box office success.

The Movie Serials

One of the earliest forays into adapting comic books, comic strip and pulp magazine characters to the silver screen came in the form of movie serials, short films shown in chapters generally appearing before or after the main features at local cinemas. Usually told in 12 to 15 installments, theaters would most often show a new chapter each week. The action almost always ended in a cliffhanger except for the final chapter. Interested audiences –

generally kids – would then have to return the next week to find out if the hero or heroine would escape to fight another day.

Many different genres including westerns, science fiction and action-adventure were represented, but superheroes serials in particular offered the first chance for live interpretations of leading characters. Studios such as Columbia, Republic and Universal all produced movie serials as early as 1912, but popularity soared to amazing heights when they began to utilize comic characters.

Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel, Blackhawk, Congo Bill, Captain America, Brick Bradford, Spy Smasher, The Green Hornet, Dick Tracy and others leaped into live-action adventures, as did Tarzan, Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers and The Spider. Terry and the Pirates, Mandrake the Magician, The Phantom and Brenda Starr, Reporter also took their bows on the silver screen.

Some of the most celebrated comic character serials of this era, noted as the Golden Age of Serials, included *Flash Gordon* (1936), *Dick Tracy* (1937), *Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars* (1938), *The Lone Ranger* (1938), *Dick Tracy's G-Men* (1939), *Mandrake the Magician* (1939), *The Drums of Fu Manchu* (1940), *The Green Hornet* (1940), *The Shadow* (1940), *Dick Tracy vs. Crime Inc.* (1941), *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* (1941), *Spy Smasher* (1942), *Batman* (1943), *The Phantom* (1943), *Captain America* (1944), *Zorro's Black Whip* (1944), *Brenda Starr, Reporter* (1945), *Superman* (1948), *Batman and Robin* (1949), and *Atom Man vs. Superman* (1950).

Animated shorts and features also grew during this period, with Fleischer Studios' *Superman* cartoons leading the way. They, like their live action counterparts, were considered children's fare.

By the mid- to late-1950s, most studios had halted their production of movie serials to focus on bigger budget films. Audiences began to get their short stories fill from television and expected more when they left the house for movie theaters. This early era which brought the beloved characters from the four-color page to the big screen had ended, only to be revived decades later in a renaissance of creativity and revisited with the advent of DVD technology.

The Small Screen

When discussing the place of comics on the big screen, it's hard to ignore the role of the small screen in their development. Television became a haven for superheroes in the 1950s. *The Adventures of Superman* ran from 1952 through 1958 with George Reeves as Clark Kent/ Superman, Phyllis Coates (Season 1) and original film "Lois" Noel Neill (Seasons 2-6) as Lois Lane, Jack Larson as Jimmy Olsen, and John Hamilton as Perry White. While there were some lighthearted moments, the action was played serious.

Not so for *Batman*, which ran from 1966 to 1968 and inspired a short-lived but widely noted Bat-craze. The show starred Adam West as Bruce Wayne/Batman, Burt Ward as Dick Grayson/Robin, Alan Napier as Alfred Pennyworth, and Neil Hamilton as Commissioner Gordon. Superstar guest villains included Cesar Romero as The Joker, Frank Gorshin as The Riddler, Burgess Meredith as The Penguin, and Julie Newmar

as Catwoman, among many others. The series also spawned a feature film in 1966.

Wonder Woman appeared as a pilot film which aired on ABC in 1974 and starred Cathy Lee Crosby as Wonder Woman/Diana Prince. Another, more faithful take, launched in 1975 with *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman* (called *The New Original Wonder Woman* in its first season). Starring Lynda Carter as Diana Prince/Wonder Woman and Lyle Waggoner as Steve Trevor, it ran for 55 episodes from 1975-1979.

Spider-Man came to live-action TV in 1977 in *The Amazing Spider-Man*, a one-hour, made-for-television movie starring Nicholas Hammond as Peter Parker/Spider-Man. Thirteen episodes followed, but the show was soon cancelled.

The Incredible Hulk debuted as a pilot film in 1978 and a series quickly followed. The show starred Bill Bixby as David Bruce Banner and Lou Ferrigno as the Hulk, transforming the tale of the title character into a version of *The Fugitive*. The show ran for four seasons and spawned three made-for-television movies.

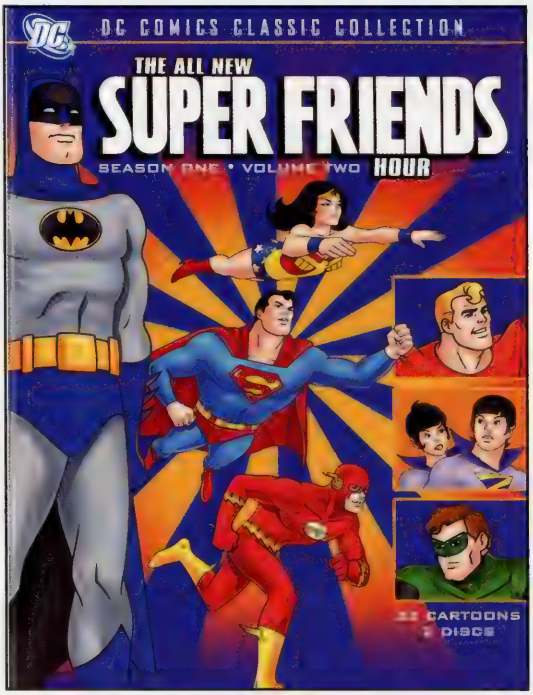
There were other attempts at live action (including two *Captain America* tele-films and a *Doctor Strange* pilot), but other than these notable shows, success was largely confined to the world of animation.

The Justice League of America appeared on *The Superfriends*. Aquaman, Tarzan, The Lone Ranger, Spider-Man, The X-Men, The Fantastic Four, Captain America, Sub-Mariner, Iron Man and others were featured on cartoons for years with varying degrees of success. Superman and Batman particularly had a healthy number of long runs in animated form. Still, Hollywood craves the splash of the feature film.

Return to the Big Screen

While the '50s, '60s and '70s offered superheroes on television, it wasn't until Superman returned to the movie theaters in 1978 with *Superman: The Movie* that the genre began to enjoy the type of box office success now expected of it. The film starred Christopher Reeve as Clark Kent/Superman, Margot Kidder as Lois Lane, Gene Hackman as Lex Luthor, and Marlon Brando as Jor-El.

The film told the origin story of the last

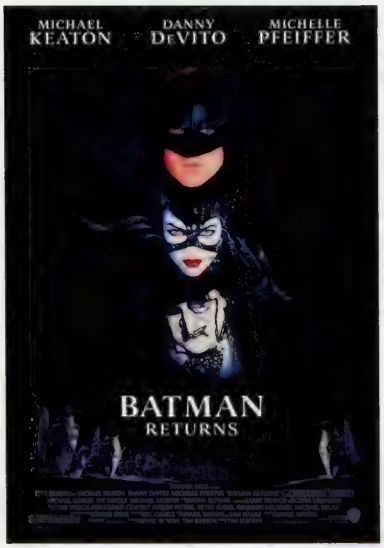


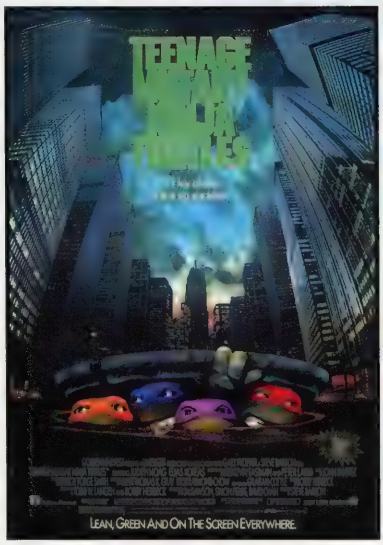
son of Krypton, his arrival on Earth, his upbringing in Kansas, and arrival on the scene in Metropolis. It brought a modern take to the character, which was then 40 years old. With the tagline, "You'll believe a man can fly," filmmakers used then-cutting-edge special effects to make that belief possible.

Warner Brothers had from the beginning seen the potential for Superman to be a film franchise. As producers Alexander and Ilya Salkind had done with their earlier *The Three Musketeers* and *The Four Musketeers: Milady's Revenge*, they filmed a substantial amount of the sequel during production of the first film. However, tensions lead to Richard Donner being replaced by director Richard Lester, and much of *Superman II* (1980) was re-shot (in 2006, *Superman II: The Richard Donner Cut* was released and offered the film much as Donner had intended). Regardless of the intrigue, it was another hit.

Further films in the series, *Superman III* (1983) and *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* (1987), are generally considered to have lost their way. It would be 20 years before *Superman Returns* (2006) was made as an unofficial sequel to the first two, dismissing the third and fourth films. It was the last Superman movie until this year's *Man of Steel*.

Warner Brothers was





not without its superhero hits, though. Tim Burton directed *Batman* (1989) and *Batman Returns* (1992). *Batman* starred Michael Keaton as Bruce Wayne/Batman and Jack Nicholson as The Joker. *Batman Returns* saw Keaton return with Michelle Pfeiffer as Catwoman and Danny DeVito as The Penguin. Both did big business, but Burton did not return for the next sequel, *Batman Forever* (1995).

Director Joel Schumacher's film included Val Kilmer as Bruce Wayne/Batman, Chris O'Donnell as Dick Grayson/Robin, Tommy Lee Jones as Two-Face, and Jim Carrey as The Riddler.

Schumacher's *Batman & Robin* (1997) with Batman again re-cast, this time with George Clooney, also featured Uma Thurman as Poison Ivy, Arnold Schwarzenegger as Mr. Freeze, Alicia Silverstone as Batgirl, and the returning O'Donnell, was generally viewed as a franchise-killer and kept the Caped Crusader off the big screen until *Batman Begins* revived things in 2005.

During the early days of this period, Marvel's luck with feature films wasn't that great. In fact, it was mostly bad. New World Entertainment released *The Punisher* starring Dolph Lundgren in 1989. It went nowhere. Next up was *Captain America* (1990), which mercifully never

made it to theaters. It featured the Red Skull as an Italian instead of a German, and starred Matt Salinger, son of author J.D. Salinger, as Steve Rogers/Captain America. It eventually escaped on video.

The Fantastic Four (1994) was their next film that wasn't. According to several different sources, apparently the film was never intended for release and was just being made to keep the film rights secured for its studio. It was never released theatrically.

Stepping outside the realm of DC Comics and Marvel Comics characters, other comic book characters began to see screen time, including: *Dick Tracy* (1990) and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1990), which was part of a huge franchise including comic books, collected editions, cartoons, action figures and more.

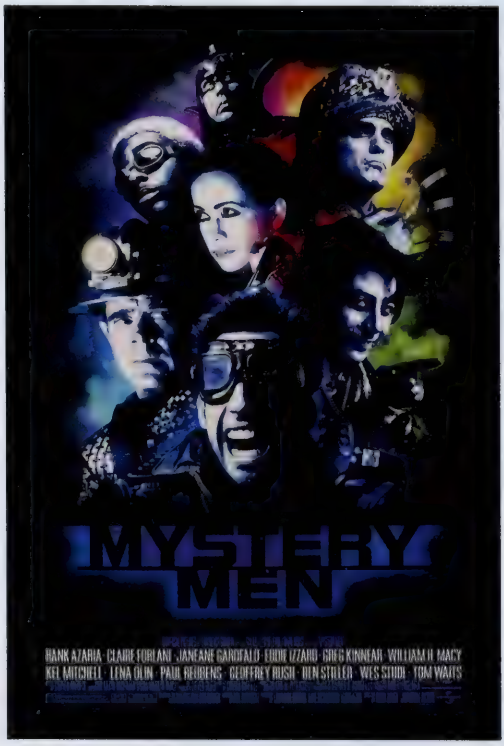
Walt Disney Pictures released *The Rocketeer* in 1991. The character first appeared on the comics scene as a back-up story in 1982's *Starslayer* #2 from Pacific Comics and was a tribute to the pulp adventure characters of the 1930s and '40s. It starred Bill Campbell as Cliff Secord/The Rocketeer, Jennifer Connelly as his love interest, Jenny Blake (based on real life pin-up queen Bettie Page in the comic book version), and Timothy Dalton as the actor/Nazi spy, Neville Sinclair. It was a modest success at the time and was issued in 2011 on a 20th anniversary Blu-ray disc.

Other comic book films included such hits and misses as *The Crow* (1994), *The Shadow* (1994), *The Mask* (1994), *Judge Dredd* (1995), *Tank Girl* (1995), *The Phantom* (1996), and *Barb Wire* (1996).

Big Box Office

In 1998, Marvel's first box office hit came from a property that few in the general public knew was based on a comic book. New Line released *Blade*, with a vampire hunting title character spun out of the pages of *Tomb of Dracula* and played by Wesley Snipes. Two sequels and a short-lived TV series would eventually follow.

Twentieth Century Fox released the first *X-Men* movie in 2000. Directed by Bryan Singer, it starred Patrick Stewart as Professor Charles Xavier, Sir Ian McKellan as Magneto, Hugh Jackman as Wolverine,



Mystery Men

What happens when you do a brilliant send-up a decade too early? The answer is *Mystery Men*. Based on Bob Burden's comic book work, *Mystery Men* was a star-studded, brilliant, loving, spot-on send-up of the superhero genre. Its one real failing – a critical one – was that it came out in 1999, a decade before there was a decade-long success of the movies it parodied.

And when we say "star-studded" cast, how about Ben Stiller (Mr. Furious), Hank Azaria (The Blue Raja), William H. Macy (The Shoveler), Janeane Garofalo (The Bowler), Kel Mitchell (Invisible Boy), Paul Reubens (The Spleen), Wes Studi (The Sphinx), Greg Kinnear (Captain Amazing) and Geoffrey Rush (Casanova Frankenstein), along with Lena Olin, Eddie Izzard, Claire Forlani and Tom Waits?

If you love superhero movies and haven't seen it, do yourself a favor and do so.

Famke Janssen as Jean Grey, James Marsden at Cyclops, and Halle Berry as Storm. Its theatrical release brought in almost $300 million worldwide and it spawned four sequels, *X2* (2003), *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006), *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009), and *X-Men: First Class* (2011). Wolverine will return in a sequel, *The Wolverine*, scheduled for July of this year, and a *First Class* sequel, *X-Men: Days of Future Past* is due out in 2014.

While the *X-Men* films were significant successes, Marvel's partnership with Sony/Columbia for Spider-Man was the lynchpin in the company's own Hollywood dreams. Director Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* was the first film of which Marvel owned a sizable chunk. Starring Tobey Maguire as Peter Parker/Spider-Man, Kirsten Dunst as Mary Jane Watson, James Franco as Harry Osborn, Rosemary Harris as May Parker, J.K. Simmons as J. Jonah Jameson, Cliff Robertson as Ben Parker, Willem Dafoe as Norman Osborn/The Green Goblin, its $114,844,116 opening weekend in the U.S. and $821,708,551 world wide box office (both according to BoxOfficeMojo.com) were record-breakers and dominated theaters in 2002, as did its sequels in 2004 and 2007. They rebooted the Spider-Man franchise with *The Amazing Spider-Man* in 2012. Its sequel is due in 2014.

Not all of Marvel's characters have successfully made the transition from comic to film. In 2003, Marvel Studios released *Daredevil*, which starred Ben Affleck as Matt Murdock/Daredevil, Jennifer Garner as Elektra Natchios, Colin Farrell as Bullseye and Michael Clarke Duncan as Wilson "The Kingpin" Fisk. Its totals were respectable, but its instant sequel, *Elektra*, bombed. That same year, director Ang Lee's *Hulk* met with poor reviews from fans and critics alike. Despite underperforming, it did well enough to entice Marvel to try again in just five years.

It was also becoming clear that the term "comic book movie" didn't have to equate to "superhero movie" all of the time. *From Hell*, written in comic book form by Alan Moore, was released by 20th Century Fox in 2001. *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, based on the comic book series from DC's America's Best Comics (ABC) imprint and Moore, was released by Fox in 2003. The author's *V For Vendetta* was released by Warner Brothers in 2005 and his *Watchmen* was released in 2009, all without his involvement.

Other notable comic films, ranging from modest indy films to big budget spectaculars, and representing publishers including Dark Horse Comics, IDW Publishing, and Fantagraphics, include *Ghost World* (2001), *American Splendor*

(2003), *Bulletproof Monk* (2003), *Hellboy* (2004), *Sin City* (2005), *Art School Confidential* (2006), *30 Days of Night* (2007), *300* (2007), *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008), and *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* (2010).

While Marvel experienced its share of successes, Warner Brothers had problems getting either of its Superman or Batman franchises up and running again, at least as far as films went. Television was another matter, though, as the studio had a seemingly uninterrupted string of successful Batman cartoons followed by the live action *Smallville* (and more recently *Arrow*).

The release of *Catwoman* in 2004 did little to help their movie success. It is not, however, that other DC properties weren't making the grade. In addition to the aforementioned *V For Vendetta* and *Watchmen*, critical and financial successes were enjoyed by adaptations of *Road to Perdition* (2002), *A History of Violence* (2005) and *Constantine* (2005).

Proving how it's sometimes not very far from worst to first, *Batman Begins* in 2005 put the Bat-franchise back in high gear. Director Christopher Nolan cast Christian Bale as Bruce Wayne/Batman, Michael Caine as Alfred, Gary Oldman as Jim Gordon, and Morgan

Freeman as Lucius Fox. He took this serious cast, treated the material seriously, and struck paydirt.

The Dark Knight, the 2008 sequel to *Batman Begins*, returned director Nolan and the key players from the 2005 cast and added a critically praised, and sadly final complete performance by Heath Ledger as The Joker. Almost nothing could have prepared audiences or theater owners for the results. With U.S. and international box office totals that surpassed $1 billion, *The Dark Knight* quickly became the most successful superhero film to that point. It still ranks as the fourth highest grossing film in American box office history.

The Dark Knight Rises, (2012), another big success, added Catwoman and the villain Bane to the mix, and completed Nolan's Batman triology.

Superman Returns, with director Bryan Singer moving over from the *X-Men* franchise in 2006, brought back the feel of the earlier Richard Donner efforts. He cast Brandon Routh as Clark Kent/Superman, Kate Bosworth as Lois Lane, and Kevin Spacey as Lex Luthor. Though it was not the success the studio hoped for, it is a film that seems to stand up pretty well over time.

The newest incarnation, *Man of Steel*, teams Batman director Nolan (serving as producer) with

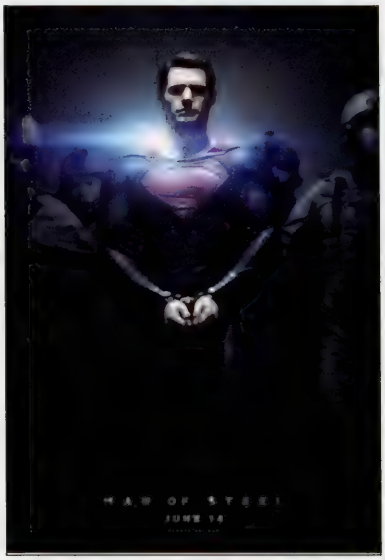
300 and *Watchmen* director Zack Snyder for the reboot of Superman due June 13, 2013. It stars Henry Cavill as Clark Kent/Superman, Diane Lane as Martha Kent, Kevin Costner as Jonathan Kent, Amy Adams as Lois Lane, Russell Crowe as Jor-El, and Michael Shannon as General Zod, among others.

Marvel's dynamic changed in 2008 when its studio organization began to finance its own films. The first two on their slate were *Iron Man* and *The Incredible Hulk*.

Jon Favreau had portrayed Foggy Nelson in *Daredevil* and also played Happy Hogan in *Iron Man*, but he's now probably best known for directing the armored Avenger's first two movies. Robert Downey, Jr., who portrays Tony Stark/Iron Man, also made a cameo in character in their second film of that year, director Louis Leterrier's *The Incredible Hulk*. This began the company's goal of building a universe or continuity much the way they had in comics.

These efforts continued in *Iron Man 2*, *Thor* and *Captain America: The First Avenger*, leading to Marvel's *The Avengers*, directed by Joss Whedon, which became the top performing superhero film to date and has the third highest U.S. box office performance in history.

Iron Man 3, which will have just debuted as this issue is published, kicks off Marvel's slate and will build toward the second Avengers movie in 2015. *Thor: The Dark World* (2013), *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (2014), and *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) are presently slated before *Avengers 2*, and *Ant-Man* is expected to follow it. Additionally, Fox has announced a new *Fantastic Four* feature for 2015 as well.



As long as the successes continue, there are more movies to come. Comic characters have had a rich and long lasting journey from the four-color page to the silver screen. From movie serials to summer blockbusters, these characters and their stories have provided years of entertainment for fans of all ages. The future looks bright for comic book fans as more and more properties are optioned by movie studios and even brighter for these characters that will never fade to black, even after the credits roll.

Brandon G. DeStefano, a former Editor of Gemstone Publishing, is a freelance writer. He contributed the original draft of this article for The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide #39. Former Editor Lindsay (Dunn) Wallace and Associate Publisher J.C. Vaughn contributed to the original published version and Vaughn provided the most recent revisions.

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COLLECTING MOVIE POSTERS

By Bruce Hershenson

This 1921 one-sheet was auctioned at Christie's East in 1990 for $39,600.

Almost everyone has heard of collecting coins, stamps, baseball cards and of course, comic books, but only a surprisingly small number of people have even heard of collecting original vintage movie posters! Why is that? Because the other types of collectibles were *all* originally sold directly to the general public, and in very large quantities, so large numbers survive, and there is always the chance of someone discovering a large collection lurking in anyone's attic.

But movie posters (the ones displayed at the movie theaters) were never sold to the general public (at least not until the 1970s), and even if you begged a theater owner to give you one, they could not, because that poster was needed to be used for display at the next theater showing that movie. The *only* people to have movie posters were the owners of "poster exchanges", the companies that distributed posters to theaters. On rare occasions, movie posters are found in closed down theaters or in the homes of former theater owners, or in torn down buildings where they were used for insulation between walls and under floors!

So the rarity of older movie posters is many times that of *any* other collectible! In the movie poster hobby, when there are 50 examples of a poster from the 1930s, that is considered a "common title," and there are lots of titles from the 1930s and earlier where not even *one* example of the movie poster is known to exist, and many others where only a few are known.

This rarity surprisingly works against the hobby growing. Quite often I am contacted by people who want a specific poster, and would be happy to

pay above what it has sold for the past few times, and I have to tell them that it is likely that all the known examples are in collections where the owners would likely not sell at any price.

It is also hard to get new collectors when there is next to no one who started collecting as a child. Millions of people started out collecting coins, stamps, baseball cards and of course, comic books when they were young, and when they get older and start having disposable income, they often return to the hobby of their youth, which is almost never collecting movie posters!

But recent years have seen a major new branch of the movie poster collecting hobby emerge. Starting after the great success of *Star Wars* in 1977, and the insatiable demand for posters that the movie produced, the creators of movie posters started selling them directly to dealers, who then re-sold them directly to collectors. While there are a few very rare titles and styles of posters, most post-1980 posters are available in *far* larger numbers than the older posters.

We auctioned this *King Kong* at Christie's East in 1994 for $97,100.

Even into the 1990s, the number of full-time poster dealers, collectible shows and auctions was very low. In 1990, I organized the first ever all movie poster auction by a major auction house, and it took in just under $1,000,000 (with one poster from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* auctioning for $39,600!), but such auctions were few and far between.

In 1999, the Internet (primarily through eBay) finally brought a way for new collectors to easily enter the hobby and I moved my million dollar business entirely onto eBay that year, and over the next few years my list of customers grew from 2,500 to over 25,000, and my sales doubled to over $2,000,000 a year!

In 2008, I moved my entire business off eBay onto my own site, eMoviePoster.com, and over the four years since have nearly doubled my sales to just under $4,000,000 a year, and we auction an unbelievable 110,000 posters per year! In addition there are now several other competing auction sites, and hundreds of dealers with often elaborate selling sites, many with thousands or tens of thousands of posters online.

Best of all, an awful lot of posters can be purchased for well under the cost of a reproduction of the very same poster. Around half of the 110,000 posters we auction each year sells for $14 or under, with many thousands selling for a few dollars or under. A new collector with a modest budget can still put together a fun collection of posters that can easily be displayed and enjoyed on their walls.

We recently auctioned an excellent example of this first James Bond one-sheet for $1,450.

We recently auctioned this rare original Italian 39" x 55" for *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* for $1,850.

What is the best way to enter the hobby? The first stop should be our Auction History database at http://www.emovieposter.com/agallery/archive.html where you will find just under three quarters of a million accurate sales results, and almost all of them have enlargable images of the posters sold! Using this, you can quickly identify posters you might like to collect, and ones that fit the budget you have.

I often hear dealers tell new collectors that years later they will look back and regret many great deals they turned down, but I feel it is usually just the opposite. I advise new movie poster collectors to take their time and enter the hobby slowly, because their tastes are liable to evolve over time, and they don't want to find that they no longer want many of their earliest purchases.

I have been in this hobby so long (I have collected for over 40 years, and have auctioned full time for over 23) and I have reached the point where a lot of the collectors who bought from me many years ago are now turning to me to auction off their collections, and a large number of them have made a large profit from the money they spent on their collection over the years.

It is *this* that makes movie poster collecting such a great hobby. You can spend your time on a hobby you love, and have your walls filled with wonderful art throughout that time, and when the time comes that you want to sell your collection you will likely get far more back than you put into it. It doesn't get better than that!

What are some specifics about how to start? Here are some pointers:

1) **Buy a few inexpensive posters and see how you like them.** You can buy inexpensive frames to display them with from many sources. You may find over time that you lose interest in some of your purchas-

We recently auctioned this very first *Star Wars* poster (sold at the 1976 San Diego Comic Con for $1.75 with art by Howard Chaykin) for $1,356.

We recently auctioned this rare "teaser" one-sheet (incredible graphics for a lesser movie!) for $356.

es, but fortunately the frames are reusuable because almost all posters are standard sizes.

2) **Consider collecting on a specific actor or theme.** You might try to get one poster here from all the Steven Spielberg movies, or you might collect posters from movies about car racing. The possibilities are limitless, because there have been movies about every subject under the sun for well over 100 years. Naturally you will find collecting in the most popular areas, like James Bond or *Star Wars*, is far more expensive than choosing some less popular area!

3) **Be prepared for your areas of interest to evolve or drastically change!** Lots of collectors find that as they get deeper into the hobby their choice of what to collect changes dramatically. Many collectors buy many inexpensive posters at first and later start buying fewer, more expensive posters.

4) **Don't forget that the main idea of collecting is to have fun!** If you also make money the day you sell your collection, great, but if it turns into something you don't enjoy, then you might as well get a part-time job. Buy what you personally love, but try not to overpay (except on very rarely offered items) because part of the fun is getting a poster you want at a price you wanted to pay!

I have done nothing but auction movie posters for the past 23 years, and been in collectibles for the past 45 years, and I am certain that there has *never* been a better time to collect vintage movie posters! Thanks to the Internet, you can see large full-color images of what you buy before you buy it, and there are tens of thousands of auctions every month, and millions of posters offered at fixed prices. If you take your time, you will likely be able to slowly put together an excellent collection of exactly what you want to collect, and at prices you want to pay!

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BEHIND THE SCENES

Each year, the first Saturday in May is Free Comic Book Day. Since 2002, the entire industry has seen Free Comic Book Day reach the point where dozens of publishers large and small take part in an effort to expand the reach of comics by helping participating retailers give away free samples – often comics specifically created for the event – to new and returning readers.

Comic book retailer Joe Field, proprietor of Flying Colors Comics, has been a driving force behind many things in the industry, perhaps none of them bigger than Free Comic Book Day.

"I used to write a monthly column for the comic industry's trade magazine. In one of my columns I proposed doing something similar to Baskin Robbins 'Free Scoop Night' (these days, it's now 'Dollar Scoop Night'). I had the foresight to ask for comments from Diamond Comic Distributors since I was essentially asking them to serve as coordinators for the event. Their response was very positive, so things took off from there," he said.

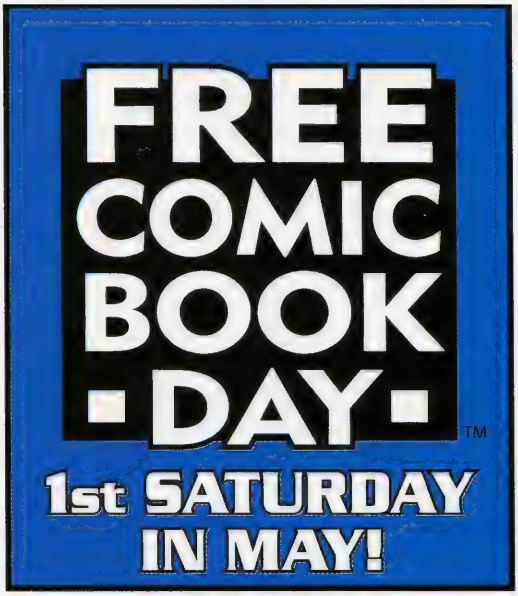
In addition to kicking off Free Comic Book Day, Field is a recipient of the Will Eisner Spirit of Comics Award for Comics Specialty Retailing Excellence, president of the comics retailer trade association ComicsPRO and a founder of WonderCon. We talked with him about Free Comic Book Day, its history and its future.

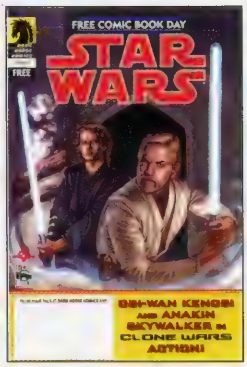
As you talked to people in the industry about starting a Free Comic Book Day, what were the different reactions you got?
Joe Field (JF): Most of the reactions seemed to be along the lines of the forehead-slapping "Why didn't we think of doing this sooner?" The minority reaction was from some retailers feeling they could just give away unsold older comics and get the same result. I believe that has since been proven faulty.

What were the first steps you took in the effort to get organized?
JF: After discussing it with Roger Fletcher, Diamond's VP of Marketing, it was agreed that we should get some of the major players together to find a way to do it. Diamond had one of their Retailer Summits in Las Vegas in October '01 and that's where I sat down with Diamond's management team and the publishers of DC, Marvel, Image, Dark Horse and Maggie Thompson from Comics Buyers' Guide. All of them were enthusiastic and thought it was worth pursuing.

Who were some of the early key contributors to making it a success?
JF: Definitely the whole Diamond team. The art department at DC came up with the FCBD logo. And when it came time to actually have the first FCBD, retailers came through in remarkable ways!

Whether it's been conventions or other promotions, you've always been a forward-thinking kind of guy. Did you think it would grow to the size it has or maybe just hope it would?
JF: The way I look at FCBD is the way cereal marketers advertise Corn Flakes — they are a part of healthy diet for breakfast, but there are other things needed to complete the balance. I know FCBD has been a healthy part of the comics biz, and it came along at a time when we weren't as steeped in comics culture as we are now. I strongly believe that the outpouring of media that pays attention to FCBD more than ten years into it is a very positive thing that leads to sales.





Originally the date moved around a bit. How was the first one decided upon?
JF: In that meeting in Vegas, it was then-Image publisher Jim Valentino who suggested we time the event with the release of the first *Spider-Man* movie. After that, the date moved to the July 4th weekend for one year, but has settled as the First Saturday in May since 2005.

On a personal level, what are some of the things you've done at your store to promote FCBD over the years?

JF: At Flying Colors, FCBD is our biggest party of the year. Besides the thousands of comics we give away, we add to the party atmosphere with creator signings, refreshments, costumed characters, some special deals, and occasional exclusive items. In 2012, for instance, we had a video crew here to shoot a mini-documentary about the origins of Free Comic Book Day. That can be seen at *FreeComicBookDay.com* and on YouTube.

On a national level, what are some of the best promotions you've seen or heard about?

JF: Some retailers have really turned FCBD into major community events. I'm blown away that more than a thousand folks show up here, but there are FCBD events that draw in excess of two thousand or more! Some of my retailer colleagues make FCBD a full-on community event, with charity fund-raisers and a carnival atmosphere. There are so many different ways to approach FCBD—and it shows the creativity and hard work of the best retailers to take FCBD to the next level every year.

How would you like to see Free Comic Book Day grow from here?

JF: I take these one at a time and I'll continue to advocate for retailers and publishers doing all they can to promote the event outside our core base of die-hard consumers.

As FCBD has developed since 2002, it's been amazing to watch how it has grown from just a few publishers to more than three dozen, from a few countries to start to nearly 50 now and having more than one million people visit comic shops on FCBD.

Free Comic Book Day is the largest single comics-related event in the world, and is now the focal point for promotion of comics and specialty retailers that sell comics. FCBD is part of a healthy comics market and I'm always gratified and humbled to see how much effort everyone puts into it.

Joe Field and his wife Libby model the finest in FCBD fashions.

Have you seen its success affecting the comic industry as a whole in terms of the mainstream culture?

JF: FCBD puts comics and comic shops into the public spotlight in huge ways. Besides the tie-in to movies, there's a huge out-pouring of support from the education community. Many libraries participate in conjunction with local comic shops and many teachers at all levels from elementary school through college give students extra credit for attending FCBD events and then reporting on the comics and the scene. Also, given that FCBD happens in nearly 50 countries around the world, in a sense, FCBD is exporting American popular culture.

There are always people who work behind the scenes to make big things happen. Over the decade since Free Comic Book Day got started, who are some of the unsung heroes?

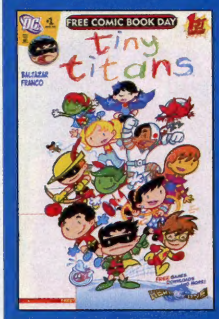
JF: The marketing team at Diamond really do a great job, so Roger Fletcher and Dan Manser deserve more than this name-drop. Previous FCBD marketing coordinators Barry Lyga [now a successful novelist] and especially Elissa Lynch (now Tierney) really did special things for FCBD. That Hugh Jackman video promoting FCBD? That was all Elissa's doing. Leslie Bowser continues the great tradition that Barry and Elissa established. On the operations' side at Diamond, Cindy Fournier and her team do a phenomenal job of making sure that 3+ million comics are moved through the system with precision and pride. Every picker and packer in each of the Diamond warehouses deserves a lot of credit.

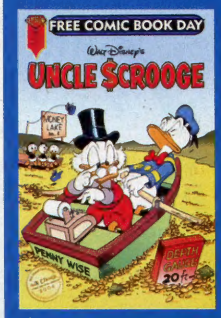
Lavish cakes are only one part of the festive carnival atmosphere of FCBD celebrations.

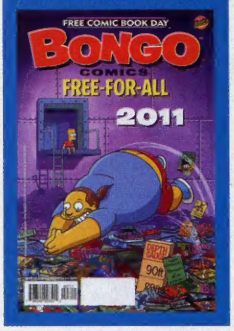
There are some retailers who don't participate. What's the funniest or strangest reason you've heard for a retailer not taking part in it?

JF: A couple of years ago, I called and talked with a number of retailers that had not signed up to participate. One told me he didn't need to buy the FCBD comics because he still had an unopened case of *Badrock* #1 he could give away! Wow! Talk about missing an opportunity. I had another retailer bristle at the suggestion that, by asking him to be an official FCBD retailer, I was telling him how to run his business!

Look, the beautiful thing and the maddening thing about comic book specialty retailers is that we are a fiercely independent lot. It's beautiful because we can each carve our own niche and create unique store environments that fit our personalities and communities. It's maddening because some retailers just don't get it and don't want to do a little work for a good return.







On the more serious side, how would you encourage those not participating to reevaluate things?

JF: I'd kindly ask them to consider that there are no other international promotions that draw over one million people to comic shops on a single day and yet cost as low as $50 to participate.

Anything else you'd like to add?

JF: Among the primary goals of Free Comic Book Day is to get people to visit their local comic shops. I hope everyone reading this will do what they can to promote and support FCBD and their local comic shop. Comic book retailers used to have competition that was primarily other small specialty collectibles' shops. These days, the primary competition for comic shops are behemoths like Amazon, eBay, Barnes & Noble and Wal-Mart! So please support your local retailers!

An ever more healthy comic book business is as great for readers and fans as it is for those of us who work in the business! Everyone reading this has my personal invitation to score free comics at your local comic shop every First Saturday in May on Free Comic Book Day!

You can visit the website for Free Comic Book Day at ***www.freecomicbookday.com.***

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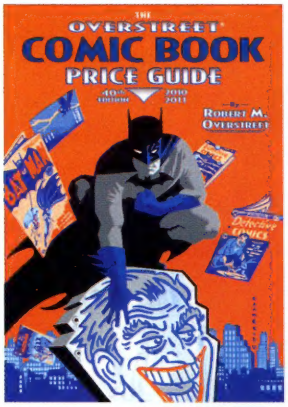

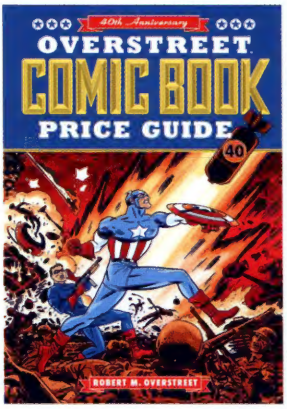

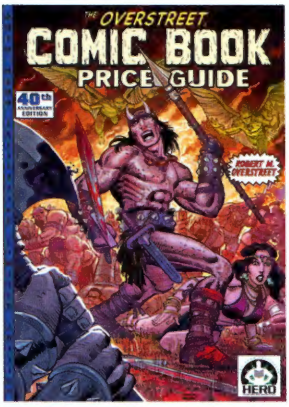

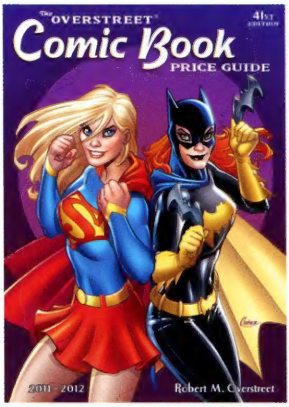

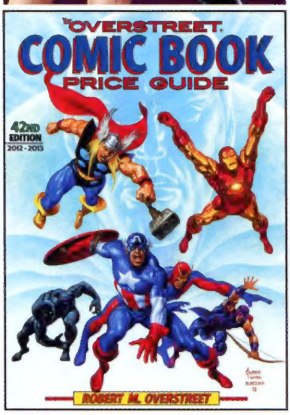

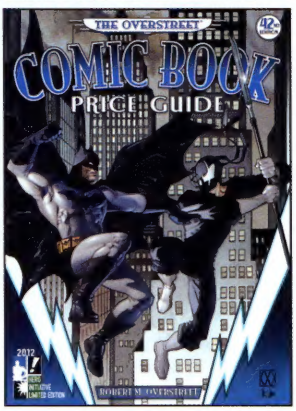

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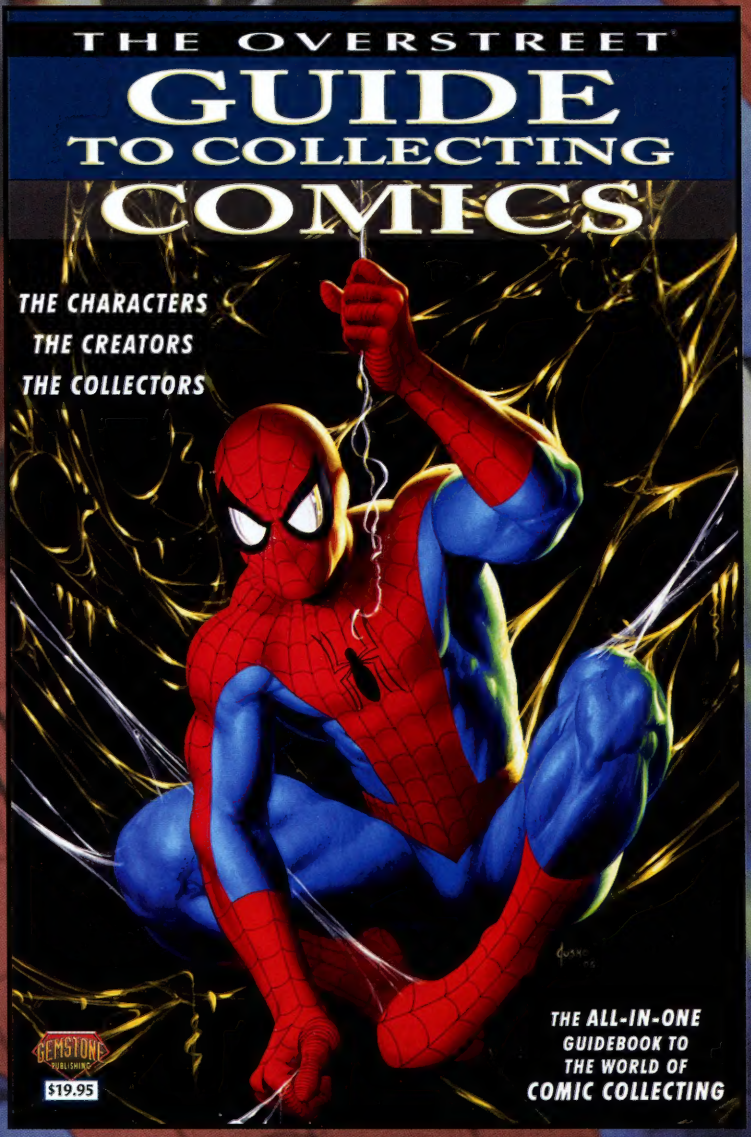

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